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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: MIDDLE EAST; IRAQ;
AFGHANISTAN; TERRORISM

MIDDLE EAST

1. "Stumbling block on road to peace"

The liberal Toronto Star opined (8/5): "...Bush has been pressing Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to divert the path of the barrier so it consumes less West Bank territory. But Sharon last week dismissed Bush's request to dismantle or move the fence.... Israel has every right to build a security fence, or wall, along its borders. Many countries have such barriers. The U.S. has built high-tech fences, complete with barbed wire, along much of its border with Mexico. Washington even flirted with the idea of a similar security fence along parts of its border with Canada after the World Trade Center terrorist attack. But it is a mistake to build the fence on land that might become part of a separate Palestinian state, or be controlled by Palestinians, if the current Mideast peace process is successful. Sharon knows the fence won't stop terrorists determined to attack Israel.... However, Bush must continue to pressure Sharon to dismantle the fence. At the least, the U.S. president must demand it follow the Green Line. Sharon needs to be told firmly that he cannot indirectly annex parts of the West Bank. To do so will damage this oh-so-fragile peace process."

IRAQ

2. "U.S. wants Saddam, but dead - not alive"

Contributing foreign editor Eric Margolis wrote in the conservative tabloid Ottawa Sun (8/3): "...Chances are Saddam, like his sons, will be killed in a Bonnie and Clyde-style shootout. He is unlikely to be captured, unless incapacitated. The Bush administration will be delighted not to put Saddam on public trial. Dead dictators tell no tales.... Saddam should be handed over by the U.S. to the UN War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague that is trying Serbia's Slobodan Milosevic and other accused Balkan war criminals. After all, it was Washington that engineered Milosevic's delivery to The Hague, an act for which the U.S. deserves high praise. What applies to Milosevic applies equally to Saddam Hussein. In fact, it would be better for the Iraqi leader to stand trial at the newly constituted International War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague. But the Bush administration, in one of its most shameful acts, has refused to join this tribunal or co-operate with it. Should Saddam be gunned down, like his two sons, there will be glee among many Americans and rejoicing in the White House. But Saddam Hussein is not John Dillinger or a prize elk. However odious, he was the leader of a sovereign nation and a government recognized by the U.S. Killing foreign heads of state violates international law and the directives made by three American presidents.... America, the world's greatest democracy, has no business murdering foreign leaders. Such behaviour is criminal, immoral, undemocratic and reeks of the law of the jungle. Past U.S. attempts to murder foreign leaders have proved self-defeating.... George Bush may yearn to drape the body of Saddam over his Jeep and show it off to the folks around Crawford, Texas, but he should be forcefully reminded that the president represents the laws of the land. Bad enough the White House waged a totally unnecessary, unprovoked, undeclared war on Iraq based on spurious charges. This egregious offence should not be compounded by cold-blooded murder, no matter how odious the intended victim."

AFGHANISTAN

3. "The Afghan trenches"

Editorialist Serge Truffaut wrote in the liberal Le Devoir (8/4): "The UN report on Afghanistan says the present climate of danger is seriously threatening the peace process.... [Afghanistan] is a general state of chaos accompanied by an increase in violence.... The vast and essential demining program has been suspended in more than ten provinces.... The burka is now almost as visible as in the days of the Taliban. Women in fear of men remain basically prisoners in their own homes.... This general degradation is due to two political factors: The first is that the foreign

countries involves, mainly the U.S. and Europe hesitate to order additional deployment of troops.... The other...is Iraq. Several American analysts have stated that the preparation of the war in Iraq guaranteed that the Afghan file would be relegated to the background by the Bush administration."

TERRORISM

14. "Bush's Cassandras"

Editorialist Serge Truffaut wrote in the liberal Le Devoir (8/5): "President Bush does not want to declassify that famous chapter the senators wrote on Saudi Arabia despite the demands of these senators and the Saudi Government itself. According to information revealed by elected officials who worked on the report, Saudi agents informed their government about the intentions of the perpetrators of September 11. If the Saudi government is so intent on having the chapter concerning itself made public, why is Bush refusing? Is it to protect the CIA and the FBI. Is it not to hurt some Saudi sensitivities.... While we wait for an end to this confusion...we can only observe that the war against Iraq has indeed slowed down the war on terrorism on its most delicate front: the reform of the intelligence services."

15. "U.S. must take hard look at Saudi alliance"

The conservative Montreal Gazette opined (8/6): "The American reluctance to confront its relationship with this quaintly pathological kingdom is perhaps understandable. Through the vicissitudes of Mideast power politics, the Saudis have been one of the few constants, a reliable if eccentric ally and a dependable source of crude oil. But the time has come for the U.S. to start at least questioning its links to the world's most medieval monarchy. Releasing those 28 pages would make a good start."

CELLUCCI